

**Press Release for concert Music of the Commonwealth  
by Australian musicians HD Duo and Pradeep Ratnayake  
of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura**

Having chosen sitarist and composer Professor Pradeep Ratnayake of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura as the musician from Sri Lanka to compose for them for their new ambitious cross-cultural project that will focus on composers of the Commonwealth, the Australian saxophone and piano duo HD Duo - Dr. Michael Duke and David Howie - will be in Sri Lanka to perform their music at the Science Auditorium of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura on Thursday 10th May 2018 at 6.30 p.m. Pradeep Ratnayake will also be making a guest appearance on his sitar. The concert is free and open to the public on a first come first served basis.

HD Duo, says that the ultimate aim of this project, funded by the University of Sydney and the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, is to commission, perform and record one composition from each of the 53 countries represented in the Commonwealth. This initial project will focus on the collaboration with six premiere composers from six countries: Australia, Canada, UK, Malta, Cyprus and Sri Lanka. Each composer will contribute a chamber work for saxophone and piano that will be workshopped, premiered, toured and recorded for a CD. The principal aims of this project are to enhance and strengthen links between countries of the Commonwealth, greatly increasing cultural awareness and understanding.

First performing together in 2008, Duke and Howie have made the impetus for their duo the presentation of exciting and innovative chamber music. Of particular interest and drive for the duo has been their close collaboration with some of Australia's most prominent and respected composers commissioning, recording and performing these new works written specifically for them. As well as performing regularly across the major cities of Australia, HD Duo has also appeared in concert throughout the world.

Michael Duke completed his Doctorate degree in Music Performance from Indiana University studying under the tutelage of renowned classical saxophonists Eugene Rousseau, Jean-Yves Fourmeau and Arno Bornkamp. He has performed with many of Australia's premiere orchestras and has been invited to perform at numerous international conferences, music institutions and festivals as both lecturer and performer.

David studied piano under Sonya Hanke and Gordon Watson as an under graduate, and then specialized in Accompaniment, studying with David Miller in Sydney at the Conservatorium of Music and Paul Hamburger in London, at the Royal Academy of Music. He was Head of Keyboard Studies at Kings College in Somerset, England for four years before returning to Australia where he has lectured in accompaniment as a member of the Ensemble Unit since 1992 at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

Professor Pradeep Ratnayake has performed the sitar in his original compositions in distinguished venues across the world. He has collaborated with internationally recognized artists like pianists Masahiko Satoh, Joe Chindamo, Ben Waltzer and Freddie Ravel, cellist Ramon Jaffe, guitarist Thibault Cauvin, violinists Miranda Cuckson and Helen Ayers, saxophonist Eric Marienthal etc. composing for them pieces that collaborated with the sitar. Ratnayake is known for giving the sitar a particularly Sri Lankan sound – through the incorporation of its folk music, use of its traditional drums and including harmonies in playing this basically melodic instrument.

Music lovers are invited for this concert and parking will be provided within the university.